

## C H A P T E R VI

### CASKETS AND OTHER ANTIQUITIES

#### CASKETS

Buddhist Stupas were generally erected for commemorating some auspicious spots having religious significance. As such, Buddhist Stupas occasionally contain relics of Buddha himself or some outstanding personality of Buddhist society.\* Hence, as already mentioned above in Chapter III - Excavations and <sup>Summary of Results</sup> Stratigraphy - the core of the Stupa of Devanimori was opened from top by sinking a square shaft trench. This dig revealed two caskets and other antiquities. The other antiquities are dealt at their respective places. (The tabular chart on page No. clearly shows the stratigraphic positions of these caskets and other antiquities).

Both the caskets are made of chlorite schist, greenish grey in colour. One of them (No.I), which is inscribed, is intact while the other (No.II) unfinished specimen is broken.

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\*The famous Stupas at Sarnath, Gaya, Kusinara etc., are located at spots which had some significance in the life of the Great Master, while the Stupas of Sanchi, Amaravati etc., are located on active highways of Ancient India.

CASKET I:

Stratigraphic Position:

This casket is found placed in a broken reddish brown pot of terracotta having medium fabric (Fig.67). This pot is a lower part of a globular vessel having sagging base. As the sagging bottom of the pot cannot coincide or fit with the circular flat base of the casket, the space under and around the casket was filled with carefully fixed brick-bats and earth in such a way that only the flat top of the casket was visible when the overlying course of bricks was removed. Strangely it seems that no special chamber or pedestal was made for enshrining such an important object of religious importance. At Taxila, one relic chamber ( $9\frac{1}{2}$ " x  $8\frac{3}{4}$ " x 11" deep) was at a depth of 6' from the surface. It was constructed of blocks of stone<sup>1</sup>. Another from the same city was circular and was covered with a special slab of stone<sup>2</sup>. The Kasia Stupa had a circular chamber (about 2" dia.)<sup>3</sup>. At Sahet Mahet, the casket was placed in the 'singularly primitive receptacle'<sup>4</sup> of undressed stone slabs with decorations of lotus on one side. At Sanchi also, the casket was found placed in a simple tiny relic chamber<sup>5</sup>.

The central portion of course No.49 on which this casket was placed was made of ordinary plain rectangular bricks laid roughly on a rectangular plan. The brick on which the sagging base of the pot which contained the casket was placed was a half brick. The central part of this brick was scooped in a shallow concavity of about 4"

diameter and  $\frac{3}{4}$ " depth. The base of the pot was fixed in this depression.

Architecturally, this casket was actually deposited at the centre of the top course of Platform I (base platform), at a height of 25.07 feet from the base of the Stupa. Or in other words, this casket was placed at the base of the circular drum at a depth of about 13' from the present dilapidated top. The course on which this casket was deposited was in a Pipal leaf alignment. (For details, see Chapter IV : Architecture).

#### Description:

This greenish grey casket is a squat cylindrical box (Fig.65). It is 5" high including the top knob and 3.95" high upto its flat top. It has slightly tapering sides due to which its base has 6.8" diameter, top 6.7" and the base of lid 6.6".

This casket is made in three parts - (1) The surmounting stopper, (2) Lid, (3) Box. The stopper is hand-made while the lid and the box are finished on fast lathe.

The plain undecorated nailshaped stopper has a hemispherical head having 0.65" height and 1.1" diameter. The lower part of this stopper is square in cross-section (0.5" x 0.5").

The lid has 6.7" diameter, 1.05" height and 0.7" thickness. The top surface of the lid is slightly concave, while the underside is prominently convex. The outer surface is

decorated with bands in relief as well as grooves running all along its side in string courses.

The lowest border of the lid is decorated with a .25" broad band in low relief. This band is marked with prominent grooved line in string course running along the axis of the band. The flank of the top angle of the lid is decorated with a pair of grooved lines. The top border along the edge of the lid is decorated with a .25" broad band in low relief. The inner edge of this band is marked with a pair of grooved lines which have formed a 0.1" broad low ridge between them. Within these circular decorations is the broad plain band (1.3" broad) sloping towards centre.

The central part of the lid is finished in a roughly convex decoration with a knob like circular centre. The flat circular top of this decoration has 1.2" diameter with a square hole through it, kept for fixing the square rod of the above mentioned stopper. This convex feature of the lid is adorned with grooves, bands in low relief and tiny flat tiers arranged in following order (starting from outer circle).

(1) groove (2) rib (3) groove (4) rib with a sloping section (5) Broad band in relief with a section sloping towards outer edge of the lid (6) groove (7) ledge (8) undercut at the base of the flat knob-like top (9) ledge (10) tiny tier in relief (11) circular disc-like top with square hole through its centre.

The box proper of the casket is 3.3" high (including the vertical ledge at the top) and 2.9" high upto the lid base. The circular base had 6.8" diameter.

This part of casket has slightly sloping sides (Top diameter 6.65"; base diameter 6.8"). The top of the vertical wall has a .3" broad and .3" high ledge running along its inner edge. This ledge is meant for coinciding with the lid along its inner side. The sloping base of this box has a .45" broad decorative band in low relief composed of slightly rounded mould in low relief, and which is flanked by rounded ridges in horizontal string course. The flank of the top angle of the box is also decorated in .2" broad band in relief which is marked by grooved line.

The outer surface of the base of this box is flat with a darker circular mark of break caused by detaching of the surplus stone kept for fixing the object on the lathe.

This casket bears two inscriptions. One inscription dealing with Prattvutasamutpāda text of Buddhist religion is inscribed on the outer and inner surface of lid only, while second inscription on the outer surface of the lower body (box) of the casket (including the underside of its base). The Prattvutasamutpāda inscription is inscribed in thin characters of Western Indian Brahmi script, while the second inscription is inscribed in deeply carved bold letters (about .05" broad) of the same script. In the case of second

inscription, first the faint letters are scratched roughly to plan the writing in the limited field. The final deeply carved letters are inscribed on the faint letters, traces of some of which are still retained.

The characters of these inscriptions are typical Western Kshatrapa characters of Late period when Kshatrapa characters seem to be undergoing a formal change. Unlike the characters of Rudradaman's inscription of Junagadha, the characters of this inscriptions are more advanced in their decorative elements. The Shirorekhas of the letters are more clear and are depicted clearly on all letters. The loops of lower ends of ka, ra (turning towards right of the letter) are typical. The loop of half ra is also executed in a prominent decorative loop turning towards right of the letter (e.g. Pra in Prabhāvanīdhave). Letters like Ma, Va, Sa etc., have still the Kshatrapa element of angular form while the rounded letters like Pa, La, Cha, Dha, Sa etc., have already undergone the change which according to Buhler was due to the impact of North Indian style<sup>6</sup>. But the letters like Va are still in transitional form (rounded angular) between Maitraka and Kshatrapa period. The additional vowels like Ā is represented by inverted loop, while the I is represented by half circle. Long I is represented by a hooked segment of a circle (as is Shri), U is represented by simple hyphen-like short stroke attached to the left of letters (as in Ru in Rudrasena). Thus, the characters of this inscription are in transitional form of the last phase of Kshatrapa period, parallels of which are found at Nagarjunikonda in Southern India.

First inscription is of purely religious importance and is written in prose. But the second inscription is in verse (except its opening word "Namassarvagnyāya" which is a kind of obeisance). It is composed in six verses. The first verse is in Anustupa meter of 8 'mātrās'. The second, third, fifth and sixth are in Āryā meter of 12, 18, 12, 15 mātrās, while the fourth verse is in Gīti meter of 12, 18, 12, 15 mātrās. The actual transcription and translation of this inscription are as follows:

LINE I Namassarvvagnāya.  
Gnānānukampākāruṇyaprabhāvanīdhaye namah.  
Samyaksambuddhā<sup>h</sup>āryyāya (Sūryyāya) Paravāditamonude.  
Saptavimshatyadhike Kathikanrupāṇamsamāgate-  
bd/shate. La

LINE II Bhadrapadapanchamadine Nrupatau Shrīrudrasene cha  
kra (kru) tamavanike tubhūtammahāvihārāshraye  
Mahāstupam  
Satvānekanugrahanīratābhyām Shākyabhikshubhyām

LINE III Sadhvagnivarmanāmnā Sudarshanena cha  
Vimuktarandhreṇa Karmanantike cha  
Pāshāntikapallau Shākyabhikshukāvatra (tr)  
Dashabalasharīra-  
Nilayashshubhashailamayassvayam Varahēṇa

BOTTOM LINE I Kuṭṭimakatō (?go)kra (kr)toyām  
Samudgakassenaputreṇa.  
Mahasenabhikshurasya cha karayita  
Vishrutah samudgasya

BOTTOM LINE II Sugataprasādakāmo Vṛddhyarṭthandharmma-  
-saṅghābhyām.

Arranged in proper verse form, the text of the inscription would read as under:

Namassarvagnāya

Gnānānukampākārunyaprabhāvanidhaye namah.

Samyaksambuddhā (Su)ryāya Paravāditamonude.

Saptaviṃśatyadhike Kathikanrpanām Samāgatebdshate.

Bha (Bhaa)drapadapanch (pancha)amadine Nrupatau Shrirudrasene cha.

Kra (Kr) tamavaniketubhutammahāvihārāshraye Mahāstūpam (pam).

Satvānekanugrahaniratābhyām Shākyabhikṣubhyām (bhyam).

Sādhvagnivarmanāmnā Sudarshanena cha Vimuktarandhrena.

Kārmantike cha Pāshāntikapallau Shākyabhikṣukavatr (tra).

Dashabalashariranilayashshubhashailamayassvayam Varāhena.

Kuṭṭimakato (gah)kra (kr)toyam Samudgkassenaputrena.

Mahasenabhikṣurasya cha kārayitā vishrutah Samudgasya.

Sugataprāsādakāmo Vṛddhyarṭthandharmmasaṅghābhyām.

Salutation to the Omniscient:

Salutation to him who is the Ocean of knowledge, compassion, kindness and lustre, completely risen sun the destroyer of darkness in the form of opponents. When one hundred twenty-seven years of Kathika kings elapsed, on the fifth day of Bhadrpada when king Rudrasena was ruling this great Stupa which was like the banner of this earth was erected



in the vicinity of the Mahavihara (great monastery) near villages Karmāntika and Pāshāntika, by two Buddhist saints namely saint Agnivarmma and faultless Sudarshana, who were engrossed in favouring many souls on account of their Satvaguna. This casket, which was made of auspicious stone and which was the abode of relics of Dashabala, the protector of Buddhist monks, was placed in the pavement by Varaha, son of Sena. The casket was got prepared for the prosperity of Dharma and Sangha by the famous Bhikshu Mahasena who was desirous of the favour of Buddha.\*

From the above translation, it is clearly evident that the inscription opens with an obeisance to the Sarvvagnya (Omniscient - Buddha). The first verse is also composed for salutation to the Buddha "who is the very ocean of right knowledge, compassion and lusture, the perfectly enlightened 'Ārya' (if we read 'Arya' and 'the sun' if we read 'Sūryaya'— the latter reading gives better meaning) dispelling the darkness in the form of disputant of other faith".

Second verse gives the date of erection of the Mahastupa, which according to this inscription is the 5th day of Bhadrāpada (corresponding to September-October) in the Hundred and twenty-seventh year of the Kathika Kings, when king Rudrasena was ruling.

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\*The translation was done by Shri J.S.Pade, Superintendent, Manuscript Section, Oriental Institute, M.S.University of Baroda, Baroda. The writer is thankful to him for this kind help.

The third and fourth verses state that this Mahastupa was erected by two Monks namely Agnivarmma and Sudarshana, near Karmantika and Pashantika villages.

The fifth verse states that this casket (Samudgaka) is the abode of Dashabalasharira, i.e. relics of Dashabala one of several adjutines of Buddha. Further, it is stated that this casket was made by Varaha, son of Sena.

The last verse indicates that this Stupa was erected for propagation and expansion of Dhamma (religion) and Samgha (institution of monks).

Hence from these statements, it can be concluded that this Stupa was built on 5th day of Bhadrapada month in the Hundred and twenty-seventh year of the Kathika kings when King Rudrasena was ruling. This Stupa was erected by two monks, namely Agnivarmma and Sudarshana near villages Karmantika and Pasantika. The casket, made of auspicious stone is claimed to be the abode of the relics of Buddha, who is further described as "<sup>h</sup>Sakyabhikshukāvātru". The casket is further said to have been enshrined on the pavement by Varaha himself son of Sena. The famous Bhikshu Mahasena who was desirous of Buddha's grace got this casket prepared for the expanding the religion and the institution of monks.

To put this inscription in exact chronological position, we have to identify and interpret the date given in the inscription, which is 'the fifth day of Bhadrapada, in the

Hundred and twenty-seventh year of Kathika kings, when king Rudrasena was ruling'. The day and name of the month can be identified very easily. But the term 'Kathika' which signifies the family name of the ruling dynasty cannot be identified with certainty. In such condition, we have to check this date by cross-checking. It is a well-known fact that the typical name 'Rudrasena' is quite common name in the Western Kshatrapas - Rudrasena I (Saka 125-142 - A.D.203-220), Rudrasena II (Saka 180-192 - A.D.258-270) and Rudrasena III (Saka 270-300 - A.D.348-378). But as the inscription simply mentions 'Nrupati Shri Rudrasena' and does not give the name of any of his relatives, i.e. father or brother or even predecessor, we have to tally the years of reigns of these three Rudrasenas. These calculations indicate that 127th year of Saka Era falls within the reign of Rudrasena I (Saka 125-142 i.e. A.D. 203-220). Moreover, out of sixty-nine coins discovered from Devanimori, about sixty coins ranging between A.D.205 and 375 belonged to the Western Kshatrapas. But curiously enough, only one coin belonged to Rudrasena I. But the script of the inscription seems to be belonging to later Kshatrapa period. In such confusion, if the Kathikas can be identified with the late Kshatrapas, the Stupa might have been built during the reign of Rudrasena III (A.D. 348-378). But, this identification also keeps the solution doubtful.

The other important noteworthy information obtained from

this inscription is regarding the original place names of Devanimori and Shamalaji. The later has already been proved to be a Kshatrapa period fortified town.\*

As already mentioned above, the Stupa is stated to have been erected by two monks at a Palli (village) called Pasantika which can be no other than the present excavation site of Devanimori. The other nearby place-name mentioned in the inscription is the Karmantika which seems to be present Shamalaji. This assumption can be cross-examined by other evidence also. A big tank to the north of Shamalaji even at present is known as 'Karamanu' tank - the name which seems to have been derived and retained in its present form. Such names were common even in Buddhist period when they indicated settlements of artists and artisans.

#### CASKET II :

This casket was found placed under the base of the Stupa. It was found laid in a disorderly position in something like a pit of blackish earth, which was overlying the foundation layer of yellow silt.

The lid of this casket is broken to pieces. But from the fragments, it is clear that it was resembling to the lid of Casket I. But the unfinished lower cylindrical box is still intact.

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\*The excavations conducted during 1961-62 at Shamalaji revealed a thick fort-wall of Kshatrapa period.

Like Casket I, this box is also cylindrical with slightly tapering shape. Its base is  $6\frac{1}{2}$ "<sup>in</sup> diameter and top is  $5\frac{3}{4}$ " in diameter.

This casket is in unfinished condition. It seems to have been left in its present condition after its primary modelling for shaping. As a result, it reveals interesting details of technique of manufacture of such caskets.

Technique of manufacture:

From a close observation of both caskets, it seems that first a suitable piece of stone was selected which was roughly dressed to desired size and shape (which was slightly tapering cylindrical). After this, it was hollowed from the top upto bottom keeping the base intact. This hollowing was executed very carefully because the circular thin wall (.6" broad) should not be damaged. Moreover, a vertical ledge running on the inner circumference of this box was to be kept to exact measurements to receive the lid. This process was done by vertical flaking. This casket is left at this stage. Its lid is broken.

It was found to be filled with ashes (probably of some important personality). No other antiquity was found from this casket. Therefore, it seems that due to its unfinished dilapidated condition, it was placed under the Stupa, while Casket I was finished on lathe and finally inscribed.

The tradition of Schist stone caskets was prevailing in Gandhara region at Gajdheri<sup>7</sup>, Taxila<sup>8</sup>, etc. The basic form of the metal casket of Kanishka is similar to the stone casket of Devanimori. But unlike the casket of Devanimori, it is decorated with figures in relief<sup>10</sup>.

### COINS

In all, sixty-nine coins are discovered from this site, out of which fifty-nine are made of silver, four of silver-coated copper, two of copper, and four of lead. Most of these coins (59) belong to <sup>the</sup> Kshatrapa dynasty of Ujjain (A.D.100 to A.D.400). Three coins belong to Maitrakas of Valabhi (A.D.480 to A.D.766). Two fragmentary Indo-Sassanian coins of earlier type are also discovered. The rest are unidentifiable, as they are much worn out.

Fifty-four coins were found insitu from various stratigraphic positions, five were found from surface. Out of the fifty-nine Kshatrapa coins, thirty-nine coins were discovered in a tiny red pot discovered from the yellow silt filling assigned to Phase II of the site. This hoard was found just near the entrance of cell No.1 of Vihara I. One of the Maitraka coins was found in the mud-mortar of the final phase of the Stupa repairs from Platform II. But, the most interesting discovery is that of eight Kshatrapa coins. These coins were found placed in a globular well preserved pot having wide mouth, externally rounded rim and a broad (1.5") white

band on its globular body. This pot was found deposited in the Stupa core itself in the centre of the top of Platform I. A stepped pyramidal structure was built on it, on which the remaining construction of the Stupa was carried on. This stepped structure was built of typical pinkish bricks (16" x 10" x 2½") and mud-mortar (Fig.22).

From this, it will be evident that coins from this excavation were distributed in various stratum of Phase II and Phase III.

Out of these sixty-nine coins, thirty-nine could be deciphered without doubt and can be assigned to Kshatrapa and Maitraka Rulers. Two Indo-Sassanian coins are identified but they cannot be assigned to a particular ruler.

All the Kshatrapa coins were found from stratum of Phase II, when the present Vihara I was built. The Maitraka coins were found from stratum of Phase III, which represents the repairs of the monuments. The Indo-Sassanian coins were discovered from the surface layers near the votive stupas.

#### Kshatrapa coins:

The Kshatrapa coins are minted in silver alloy. They are roundish in shape and weigh 2.82 grammes to 1.2 grammes. Their thickness is also not uniform. While striking edges of some of them have been damaged and hence the round edge is split into cuts and cracks. All these coins were found

in tarnished condition and were covered with a thin coat of corrosion. Hence, they were cleaned with dilute citrate acid etc. All these coins are partly worn out or badly struck, hence legends of only thirty-two could be deciphered. Legends of seven coins were deciphered completely. No doubt, the legends on the remaining coins were partly deciphered, but their assignment to various kings was done by the help of geneological table and titles. Many of these coins are marked with punch-marks of dots, stars, crescents etc., probably in later period. These marks were probably struck by the 'Sarafs' or bankers of that period.

The main symbol on these coins is the typical Chaitya symbol composed of three arches marked by lines in relief. At the base of this Chaitya symbol are three horizontal wavy lines which are also marked by lines in relief. The marks of crescent and a group of dots are placed just above the Chaitya. The crescent is marked at left, while the group of dots at right. The crescent represents the Chandra (Moon) while the dots in circle formation represent the Divākara (the Sun). These two symbols are marked to convey the infinity of time (Yāvatchandradivākarau).

The letters of the legends are typical Brahmi letters of early centuries of Christian Era. They have the typical Sirorekha and peculiar loops and curves found on hundreds of Kshatrapa coins collected from Western India.



The busts of the Princes in profile are facing right. All of them have long pointed nose and prominent curved chin. The eyes are also depicted clearly. The bow-shaped eye-brows and eyes are typical. In some specimens, the pupil is also depicted. Most of the portraits have drooping moustaches with hook-like curves at the end. The forehead is slightly sloping. The peak-cap is drawn upto forehead in such a way that long wavy hair are sticking out from it just above the ear and dangle upto shoulder. The hair are curly at the end. In some coins, the collar of the robe is also visible. It is decorated with a band of zigzag line in relief.

As most of the coins are not struck accurately, the legends and the portraits are not in so prominent high relief. But, inspite of this drawback, the flat outlines of various features are clearly visible and could be identified easily.

The legends are written in Brahmi characters along the border of the coin in clock-wise direction. It is bordered by a circle of dotted line. Due to bad punching, most of the numerical symbols by the side of the busts are either not embossed at all or in some cases, only their parts are printed. Of these numerical symbols, only four coins could be deciphered completely - that of Rudrasena II (Saka 188 = A.D.266) and Visvasena (Saka 215-216-225 i.e. A.D.293, 294, 303).

#### MAITRAKA COINS :

In all, three Maitraka coins have been discovered. Out of

which two are of silver alloy having silver and lead. The third coin is a silver plated copper coin. The two silver coins are best preserved specimens. There are no signs of wear on them. The letters as well as symbols and the bust of the king is <sup>in</sup> very sharp distinct relief. But, unfortunately, the legend of only one could be deciphered. The second specimen, though it is in excellent preserved condition, could not be deciphered completely. Only some of its letters are deciphered. The reading of the legend or such coins are a matter of controversy among scholars (See Ref.No.54 - Chapter II).

On the obverse of these coins is represented the head of the king in profile. Letters or decoration except this head is marked on this side. ~~Nothing like~~ The profile figure represents a mature man having prominent impressing features which convey authority and dignity. The pointed nose is slightly hooked at the tip. The pointed tip and even the curve of the nostril is clearly visible. Slightly sloping forehead is typical. The bow-shaped eyebrow is also marked with a line in relief. No more details of eye are given, except its outline. The lips are depicted by two dot-like markings. Though the dots are very tiny, they are put at the exact place and hence convey the shape of the lips perfectly. The chin is marked by a prominent relief. The drooping moustache is hooked at the end. But, the most attractive feature of the head is the extra-ordinary jaw and

cheek marked very prominently. These features express a strict personality. The ear is marked by a hook-like line which depicts upper part of ear, while the earlobe is represented by a small thin loop. The peak-cap is also clearly visible, from under which are sticking out the wavy hair <sup>ich</sup> whole from a prominent curl around the ear and then drop upto the line of jaw. No other symbols, legend or other markings are represented on this side.

The reverse of these coins is marked by a trident and the legend. The legend is in typical Brahmi script with small <sup>h</sup> sirrekhas and slightly hooked letters at bottom end. This legend is inscribed in a circle and can be read in a clockwise direction. The outer line of the legend is marked by a circle formed by dotted line. The trident has three blades. The central one is straight and slightly tapering at the end. It is longer than the flanking blades. The flanking blades are shorter than the central one and are pointed at the end. They are slightly curved near their tips and are joined to the central rod by curves. The joining point of three blades is marked by a circular dot. The shaft of the trident ends in a blunt point. One of the tridents has an axe (Parasu) attached at this end. No other markings are there.

The two Indo-Sassanian coins are broken. But inspite of such condition, the beautifully adorned head on obverse and the altar and stylized figures on reverse could easily be recognized. It should be noted here that such coins were found

from Sind also.\* The Gadhaiyas which are supposed to have been derived from these coins are found in profusion from various sites of Gujarat.®

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4. Ibid., 1910-11, p.1.
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8. Marshal, Sir John, Taxila, II, pl. 141, No.101.
9. Ingholt, Herald, Gandharan Art in Pakistan, No.494.

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